

We the People of the United States, in Order to form a more perfect Union, establish Justice, insure domestic Tranquility, provide for the common defence, promote the general Welfare, and secure the Blessings of Liberty to ourselves and our Posterity, do ordain and establish this Constitution.

Section 5.

**DEMOCRATIC DECLARATION:
Honest Leadership and Open Government**

Each House may determine the Rules of its Proceedings, punish its Members for disorderly Behaviour, and, with the Concurrence of two thirds, expel a Member. Each House shall keep a Journal of its Proceedings, and from time to time publish the same, excepting such Parts as may in their Judgment require Secrecy; and the Yeas and Nays of the Members of either House on any question shall, at the Desire of one fifth of those Present, be entered on the Journal.

DEMOCRATIC DECLARATION

On November 19, 1863, President Abraham Lincoln traveled to a battlefield cemetery in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, and urged his countrymen to dedicate themselves to the preservation of “government of the people, by the people and for the people.” It is to this same cause that we, the undersigned, dedicate ourselves today.

Throughout the history of our democracy, there has been an ongoing struggle to put the people’s interest ahead of the special interests. Since the Republican Party took complete control of the White House, the House of Representatives, and the U.S. Senate, cronyism and corruption have become widespread in the people’s government.

The culture of Republican corruption is an affront to the idea of a representative democracy, and its consequences are devastating. When Vice-President Cheney’s Chief of Staff Scooter Libby, Senate Majority Leader Bill Frist, House Majority Leader Tom DeLay and others bend government to serve their own interest, or the special interest of their friends, the public interest suffers and the urgent priorities of the American people go unaddressed.

Today, Democrats across America - including those in the U.S. House and Senate, our governors, mayors and state legislators - are declaring that it is time to end the Republican culture of corruption prevailing through all levels of government. We are committed to immediate change to lead this country in a new direction, to put an end to Republican business as usual, and to make certain this nation’s leaders serve the people’s interests, not special interests. For us, this commitment spans our lifetime, as we were elected to represent the people, not the powerful.

Our goal is to restore accountability, honesty and openness at all levels of government. To do so, we will create and enforce rules that demand the highest ethics from every public servant, sever unethical ties between lawmakers and lobbyists, and establish clear standards that prevent the trading of official business for gifts.

Honest leadership is not a partisan goal. It is the key to a stronger union. We must all work together to put progress ahead of politics. Together, America can do better. We can change this government, and the American people deserve nothing less.

Our government must reflect the absolute best of the people it serves. With honest leadership and open government, America’s leaders can once again focus on the urgent needs of the American people: real security overseas and at home, economic strength and educational excellence, affordable health care, energy independence, and retirement security.

In 2006, we, the undersigned, hereby declare that we will once again provide honest leadership and open government for all our citizens and put the Republican culture of corruption behind us, so we can make progress on the real issues facing America.



*Signed by Unified Democrats
Library of Congress
Washington, DC
January 18, 2006*

PRINCIPLES OF THE HONEST LEADERSHIP ACT

Democrats offer an aggressive reform package to reverse Republican excesses and restore the public trust. Our program for change embodies the following provisions:

Close the Revolving Door. Close the revolving door between the Congress and lobbying firms by doubling (from one year to two) the cooling-off period during which lawmakers, senior Congressional staff, and Executive Branch officials are prohibited from lobbying their former offices. Eliminate floor privileges for former Members of Congress and officers of the Senate and House who return to lobby.

Toughen Public Disclosure of Lobbyist Activity. Significantly expand the information lobbyists must disclose – including campaign contributions and client fees. Require them to file disclosure reports electronically, and increase the frequency of those filings. Require lobbyists to certify that they did not violate the rules, and make them subject to criminal penalties for false certifications.

Ban Lobbyist Gifts and Travel. Prohibit the receipt of gifts, including gifts of meals, entertainment and travel, from lobbyists.

Shut Down Pay-to-Play Schemes Like the “K Street Project.” End efforts like the “K Street Project,” which Republicans created to tell corporations and lobbying firms whom they should hire in exchange for political access.

Disclosure of Outside Job Negotiations. Require lawmakers to disclose when they are negotiating private sector jobs, and require Executive Branch officials who are negotiating private sector jobs to receive approval from the independent Office of Government Ethics.

Prohibit “Dead of Night” Special Interest Provisions. Require that all conference committee meetings be open to the public and that members of the conference committee have a public opportunity to vote on all amendments. Make copies of conference reports available to Members, and post them publicly on the Internet, 24 hours before consideration (unless waived by a supermajority vote).

Zero Tolerance for Contract Cheaters. Restore accountability and openness in federal contracting by subjecting major contract actions to public disclosure and aggressive competition; criminally prosecuting contractors who cheat taxpayers, with penalties including suspension and debarment; imposing stiff criminal and civil penalties for wartime fraud on government contracting; prohibiting contractors with conflicts of interest from conducting oversight or writing contract requirements they could bid on; mandating full disclosure of contract overcharges; creating tough penalties for improper no-bid contracts; and closing the revolving door between federal contract officials and private contractors.

Prohibit Cronyism in Key Appointments. End rampant cronyism by requiring that any individual appointed to a position involving public safety possess proven credentials, and training or expertise in one or more areas relevant to the position.



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Congressional Democrats
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